Flood Exposure Snapshot:
Frequently Asked Questions

Why doesn't my county have a snapshot?

1. Your county may be considered to be inland. Snapshots were created for coastal counties as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and described in FEMA's report titled, "Coastal AE Zone and VE Zone Demographics Study and Primary Frontal Dune Study to Support the NFIP."
2. Digital flood data may not exist for your county or may not have existed when the snapshots were created.
    a. FEMA is currently creating or updating digital flood maps for the nation. Check the availability of data for your county on FEMA's Flood Map Viewer. The flood data used to create the County Snapshots were the digital flood data available in 2010.
    b. Your county may only have paper Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). Check to see the availability of FIRMs for your community.
    c. Your county may not participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which means that flood maps have not been created. Check your state to determine if your county or community participates. You may also contact your state or local floodplain manager as listed on the Association of State Floodplain Managers website.
    d. In some cases, digital flood data exists for only a small portion of a county and the coverage was not sufficient for creation of a snapshot.

What is community infrastructure?

Community infrastructure refers to facilities that have a central role in disaster response and recovery, including evacuation facilities, emergency response facilities, and primary evacuation routes. Understanding which facilities are at risk in an inundation event is a first step in reducing exposure to harm.

The number of schools listed for my county seems to be incorrect – why is that?

The number of schools for each county is based on FEMA's Hazards U.S. Multi-Hazard (HAZUS-MH) database of schools, which comes from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics and is current as of the year 2000. This number may include colleges, vocational schools, and preschools, as well as traditional kindergarten through twelfth-grade schools. The data may not be exhaustive and may contain errors. When conducting a detailed risk assessment, the best practice is to use local, up-to-date information on critical facilities such as schools and hospitals.

Why is it important to know the percentage of the population over 65 or below the poverty line?

These populations may have added difficulty in receiving communications in an emergency or gaining access to the transportation needed to evacuate. Counties may

need to place a special emphasis on serving the needs of these populations when preparing evacuation strategies.

Where do the data come from?

Data are secured from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Critical Facilities

The critical facilities data came from FEMA's HAZUS database and represent available information from 2000 to 2001. The data may not be exhaustive and other, more thorough data exist both nationally and at the local level. Through FEMA's website, you can request state HAZUS data.

Flood Data

The flood zone data were the result of a FEMA report titled, "Coastal AE Zone and VE Zone Demographics Study and Primary Frontal Dune Study to Support the NFIP." The data represent the digital riverine and coastal flood zones available as of 2010 and are a combination of Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps and Q3 flood data. The most up-to-date flood zones can be requested from FEMA's Map Service Center.

In some cases, flood zones were not available for an entire county and were therefore not included in the County Snapshots analysis. Because of this, information in the County Snapshots may not be exhaustive and may underestimate a county's flood exposure.

Demographics

The demographic information comes from Census 2010 acquired from the NOAA Spatial Trends in Coastal Socioeconomics website and from 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Summary File acquired from the U. S. Census Bureau website. For the County Snapshots, the data were analyzed at the block group level and aggregated up to the county level.

Land Cover

The land cover data came from the NOAA Coastal Change Analysis Program. These data represent the change in land cover from 2001 to 2005/2006 as observed from satellite imagery.

Roads

The roads data are from the ESRI ArcGIS 9.3 data disks, created by TeleAtlas, and represent roads as of 2005.

I've spotted a mistake. How can I provide the correct information?

Because these data sets are national in scope, there may be errors. The County Snapshots tool was designed to give users a quick look at the conditions in their county

in order to generate community interest and engage local stakeholders in risk assessment and planning activities in more detail. Most communities have access to similar state and local data sets that are up to date and accurate and can be used when conducting a risk assessment. Contact your National States Geographic Information Council state GIS representative to find out more about data holdings in your state.

The snapshots will be updated as national data sets are updated and as resources permit.